DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 444 369 FL 026 361

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TITLE In Quest of Freedom: Towards Critical Pedagogy in the Education of Bilingual Youth.
PUB DATE 2000-04-25
NOTE 37p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, April 24-28, 2000).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Action Research; Bilingual Education Programs; *Dialogs (Language); *English (Second Language); High School Students; High Schools; Language Minorities; Limited English Speaking; Power Structure; Second Language Instruction; Second Language Learning; Teacher Education; Teacher Student Relationship; *Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS *Critical Pedagogy

ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to build on the growing body of literature demonstrating the value of a dialogical process in second language learning, especially in work with students who are not part of the dominant cultural or linguistic group. It identifies and describes the ways in which bilingual secondary students engaged in dialogical processes begin to challenge the power relationships within their schools and communities, and explores the role of dialogic pedagogy in transforming the work of teachers. Three principle research questions are addressed: (1) In what ways can a critical, dialogic process come into being in the lives of students and teachers, and how does this affect their lives in and out of school? (2) What can be the role of a university teacher education program in fostering such a dialogic process? (3) What part can a critical, dialogic pedagogy play in supporting the academic achievement of bilingual students, particularly those at the secondary level? It is concluded that dialogic pedagogy in which students' linguistic and cultural understandings are sources of knowledge and bridges to the curriculum will benefit bilingual students academically and socially. Bilingual students become more interested in the academic content of school and more motivated to master the linguistic tools that will allow them a full participation in society. (Contains 56 references and 4 appendices.) (KFT)

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# In Quest of Freedom: Towards Critical Pedagogy in the Education of Bilingual Youth

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Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, Louisiana, April 25, 2000



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# In Quest of Freedom:
# Towards Critical Pedagogy in the Education of Bilingual Youth

*Que ce que sais la liberté?*
*Que ce que sais l'egalité?*
*Que ce que sais la fraternité?*

- Os Resentidos, *"Manda Carallo"* (1990)

I sit in the cafeteria at Manitou Lake West High School[1], my back to the requisite dispensers of Pepsi, proud sponsors of the school's endeavors. Before me sit Consuelo and Teresa, immigrant students from Mexico. Consuelo is slim, dark hair and eyes, with the curiousity of someone who in her second day at school in the United States. Teresa is shorter, light brown hair and eyes and a ready smile, and with a month of experience at the high school behind her. At present, she is polishing off a plate of french fries while chatting merrily with her friends. They have left family and friends behind to come to the United States, but like many new students, they seem happy to be here, and they are hopeful for the future. Consuelo mentions a goal of becoming a teacher, while Teresa is interested in pursuing a career in astronomy. And yet, my interactions with their school, their teachers, and their classmates over the past academic year make me worry about Consuelo and Teresa: A year from now, will they, too, be jaded, frustrated with school, and thinking about dropping out?

According to Faltis and Wolfe (1999), there has been a paucity of studies done on bilingual middle and high school students, curricula, and programs in the United States. Although recently research in this area has increased (e.g., Lucas, 1996; Dwyer, 1998), much of it tends to focus on how to prepare bilingual students with academic language, content area knowledge and learning strategies needed for academic success (Chamot and O'Malley, 1986). Nevertheless, a growing body of scholarly literature suggests the value of a dialogical process, especially in work with students who are not part of the dominant cultural and linguistic group. Analyzing the connection between knowledge, power and identity in ESL classrooms, Cummins (1994) writes that "subordinated group students are disabled educationally and rendered 'voiceless' or silenced in

[1] Pseudonyms are used for students, teachers, schools and cities in this study to protect confidentiality.

very much the same way that their communities have been disempowered (often for centuries) through their interactions with societal institutions," and that students will succeed to the extent that patterns of interaction in school "actively challenge societal power relations" (46). Dialogue is integral to critical pedagogy, a way of teaching which engages students and teachers alike in interactive dialogues about their lives, and where social, economic, political and cultural issues are addressed critically, especially as they effect students' lives. The goal of critical pedagogy is to draw on the strengths of students' lived experience to create a forum for their analysis of the world around them (Bakhtin, 1981; Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1986; Pennycook, 1999).

This study seeks to contribute to the critical work being done by Cummins and others by identifying and describing the ways in which bilingual secondary students engaged in dialogical processes begin to challenge the power relationships within their schools and communities. Moreover, this study also explores the role of dialogic pedagogy in transforming the work of teachers. Ladson-Billings (1995) argues for such a dialogic pedagogy that moves beyond a focus on student achievement to help students "accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate" (469).

In order to analyze the need and the potential for critical pedagogy in the lives of bilingual students, I pursue the following research questions: In what ways can a critical, dialogic process come into being in the lives of students and teachers, and how does this process affect their lives, in and out of school? What can be the role of a university teacher education program in fostering such a dialogic process? What part can a critical, dialogic pedagogy play in supporting the academic achievement of bilingual students, particularly those at the secondary level?

**Bilingual Secondary Students**

Faltis and Wolfe (1999) write that ESL and bilingual education in secondary schools "is one of the most unexamined and overlooked areas of education in the United States" (1). Although there have been some valuable contributions to research on effective educational practices for bilingual adolescents (Lucas, 1997; Mace-Matluck, Alexander-Kasparik & Queen, 1998), the need for more comprehensive research on the education of bilingual adolescents remains.

What is known is that a growing population of immigrant and second language youth are changing the demographics of U.S. schools. In 1990, one in six youths ages 14-17, or 3.4 million in total, spoke a language other than English in the home, was born in a foreign country, or both. Of these, 1.7 million, about half, were Hispanic, representing a variety of Latin American countries of origin. Moreover, there was a tremendous variety of Asian languages and countries of origin represented among these youth. Among the various immigrant groups poverty is a serious challenge, especially for Hmong, Mon-Khmer and Cambodians, who have the highest poverty rates of any single groups (Waggoner, 1999). Such children are more likely to attend inferior schools, and to be placed in lower academic tracks or in special education classes (Kozol, 1991; Oakes, 1985).

Many students in bilingual and ESL programs have limited formal education experiences in their countries of origin, lack academic success in high school, and fail to graduate. (Garcia, 1999). In 1990, drop out rates for foreign-born, non-English speakers were 1 in 5, as compared to 1 in 12 for native-born, English speaking youth. Furthermore, there are low enrollment rates in high school for Mexican-born youth, as well as for some Southeast Asian groups such as the Hmong (Waggoner, 1999).

One of the greatest challenges facing bilingual youth in high school is how to learn academic subject areas while at the same time mastering the English language. Extensive scholarship suggests that a Content-based Instructional approach helps second language learners master academic language by providing them with thematically organized material in the major subject areas (Snow & Brinton, 1997; Gianelli, 1991; Brinton, Snow & Wesche, 1989; Mohan, 1986). Nevertheless, minority language students are often separated for much of their high school career from challenging academic material and courses. They are overrepresented in lower track classrooms, and they perceive "a social wall between themselves and American-born peers" (Harklau, 1999:50). Guadalupe Valdes (1999) suggests that separate ESL programs often promote this sense of distance and separation:

> In many schools there are currently two separate worlds: The world of ESL and the mainstream world in which 'real' American schooling takes place (139).

Garcia (1999) finds that the gap between the students and their teachers is often greatest in ESL classes, as traditional ESL curriculum "assumes students are not capable of handling any academic material" (72). In her study, students were limited by ESL teachers who focused "on the forms of language rather than on the messages that those forms communicate" (73).

These many and varied challenges facing minority language youth, their teachers and their schools may appear overwhelming, yet there are several pathways to more effective practice. These include: program emphasis on academic content and social knowledge; interdisciplinary, small groups led by a single teacher; early access to mainstream academic courses and transitions to higher education; extension of instructional time; systematic, ongoing assessment; creation of challenging, for-credit courses; teacher planning and implemention teams; strengthening of partnerships with parents and institutions; and better teacher preparation (Adger & Peyton, 1999; Garcia; 1999; Gottlieb, 1999; Merino, 1999; Short, 1999; and Valdes, 1999).

Faltis and Wolfe (1999) argue that in this era of strong opposition to bilingualism, pluralism and immigrants, teachers must recognize the ideological nature of their work. To effectively provide educational opportunities to bilingual students, teachers must seek to engage them in dialogues about the social, economic and poltical forces influencing their lives.

**Critical Pedagogy**

In Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970), the late Paulo Freire rejects the traditional model of education, or *banking concept* , wherein teachers deposited knowledge in students minds. Rather, he develops a liberatory, problem-posing education:

> Whereas banking education anesthetizes and inhibits creative power, problem-posing education involvesw a constant unveiling of reality. The former attempts to maintain the *submersion* of consciousness;

> the latter strives for the *emergence* of consciousness and *critical intervention* in reality (Freire, 1970: 68).

In the past few years various scholars have taken Freire's work in problem-posing education into ESL and bilingual education contexts (Moraes, 1996; Wink, 1997). In a special issue of the TESOL Quarterly devoted to critical approaches in the field, Pennycook suggests the need for "a pedagogy of engagement: an approach to TESOL that sees such issues as gender, race, class, sexuality, and postcolonialism as so fundamental to identity and language that they need to form the basis of curricular organization and pedagogy" (Pennycook, 1999:340). Examples of such a pedagogy from the classroom include the development problem-posing literacy practices with immigrant women (Frye, 1999), acknowledging migrant students' lives in mathematics teaching (Trueba, 1998), and addressing issues of race and class in the U.S. system of justice (Hones, 1999). Critical pedagogy also is woven into teacher preparation for those working with immigrant populations in the U.S. and those teaching English abroad (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Mackie, 1999).

In his foreward to Freire's Pedagogy of Freedom (1998), Stanley Aronowitz asks, "What does freedom mean, especially in education?" (18). When pedagogy means teaching to standardized tests, what is freedom? When school curricula is governed by the vagaries of the textbook industry, what is freedom? When young people and their teachers are forbidden from using their native language to understand the word and the world, what is freedom? In an era of globalized capitalist economies fueled by cheap, expendable workers Freire writes that we must make "a decisive NO to an ideology that humiliates and denies our humanity" (27).He argues that teaching must be

> a profession that deals with people whose dreams and hopes are at times timid and at other times adventurous and whom I must respect all the more so because such dreams and hopes are being constantly bombarded by an ideology whose purpose is to destroy humanity's authentic dreams and utopias (127).

Through critical dialogues about their education and people's lives this research hopes keep the authentic dreams of bilingual students alive.

**Narrative Inquiry and Participatory Action Research**

In seeking to unveil both the dreams and the daily realities of a small number of bilingual secondary students I have chosen to use a combination of a narrative, interpretive mode of inquiry with participatory action research. I will be integrating historical, sociological, psychological and cultural perspectives to find the "circles of meaning" present in the lives of research participants (Rabinow and Sullivan, 1987). A narrative approach to will be used to reconstruct stories of the classroom and people's lives. Narrative research is chosen as a method in that it focuses on human agency, and the ability of individuals to creatively construct their lives within social and historical contexts (Casey, 1995). This research is also participatory in nature. Participatory action research views humans as co-creators of reality and emphasizes experiential knowing, dialogue, and reflective action, with knowledge arising from this action (Freire, 1970; Reason, 1994). Participatory, narrative methods helps to foster authentic dialogue between myself and research participants, and to develop their potential leadership in further research and action efforts.

The interpretative style for this narrative inquiry has three dimensions: First, through the arrangement students' and teachers' stories, punctuated by critical turning points experienced by my informants (Polkinghorne, 1995; Denzin, 1994); secondly, through the contextualization of the informants' lives within history, culture and the social milieu (Goodson, 1995); and thirdly through the identification of emergent themes, drawing on a combination of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) and interpretive interactionism (Denzin, 1994). Interpretive interactionism "begins and ends with the biography and the self of the researcher," and encourages personal stories that are thickly contextualized, and "connected to larger institutional, group and cultural contexts" (Denzin, 1994:510-511). Moreover, the stories presented in the text "should be given in the language, feelings, emotions, and actions of those studied" (Denzin, 1994:511).

The goal of the first stage of this project is to identify ways in which bilingual secondary students' perspectives and awareness of the world can become a central focus for teaching and

learning. The second stage of the project involves the creation of curricula which draws from issues in students' lives and connects these to academic coursework. The third stage of the project will include the documentation of pedagogical and curricular change in selected bilingual, ESL and mainstream classrooms.

Sources of data include weekly participant observation and field notes in classrooms, around the schools and communities, and in the homes of selected students over the course of one academic year; weekly exchange of dialogue journals between researchers and university students and selected bilingual students; videotapes of classroom activities; audiotaped interviews with selected students and teachers; and data collection from school district and government records, including information on student academic progress over the course of the academic year; and library research.

**The Setting**

Manitou Lake and Sans Arbe are located at opposite ends of a long valley in northeastern Wisconsin. The populations of these two medium-sized cities reflect the demographic changes of the past century and one-half. Many of the place names of the area reflect Anishnabe and other earlier inhabitants of the land who faced the onslaught of European diseases, warfare, broken treaties and forcible removal. The dominant cultural group today is mostly descended from immigrants from Germany and elsewhere in Europe who displaced native peoples and began farming in the valley beginning in the middle part of the 19th century. European immigration tapered off after the early part of the 20th century, and the next big influx of newcomers came after 1975, a result of U.S. involvement in a "secret war" in Laos. These refugees were the Hmong, today they are the largest minority group in the valley, and number approximately 40,000 in the state of Wisconsin. Since 1990 immigrants from Mexico have increased dramatically in the valley as well, attracted by the promise of work in a strong job market. It is estimated that there are approximately 6,000 Mexican immigrants in the valley and their numbers are growing (Meyer, 1997). Also since 1990, refugees from other wars in Iraq, Bosnia and Kosovo, as well as immigrants from Russia and elsewhere, have come to the valley in smaller numbers.

The sites for this research, Manitou Lake West High School and Sans Arbe South High School, reflect the growing diversity of the valley as well as economic trends. Manitou Lake West has about equal numbers of Mexican and Hmong students, with most of the Mexican families involved in some aspect of the nearby meat packing plants. Sans Arbe High School has a sizable Hmong population, smaller numbers of Kurdish and Kosovar students, and very few Mexicans. In response to growing numbers of Spanish-speaking students, the Manitou Lake School District has implemented a transitional bilingual education program (Spanish-English) as well as ESL (for other non-native speakers). Most of the students participating in at Manitou Lake are in the beginning levels of English language proficiency. Sans Arbe School District has an ESL program. Students participating in this study at Sans Arbe include those in beginning to intermediate level English proficiency as well as those who are in mainstream classes for most of the day.

At both high schools students receive content area instruction, but there is inconsistency in the training of teachers to deliver such content well to language learners. For example, at Manitou Lake West there is a teacher who is certified in secondary science and bilingual education with over twenty years of experience teaching bilingual students in California and Wisconsin. At the same school there is a native Spanish speaker from South America who teaches language arts, yet is not certified at all. At Sans Arbe South, an experienced teacher, certified in ESL and Spanish, attempts to deliver health content to students, while an experienced social studies teacher with a Master's degree struggles through his first year with an American History ESL class. This inconsistency of preparation in either content areas, second language education, or both has contributed instruction which often involves filling out worksheets and rarely engage students in interactive learning and critical thinking and dialogue.

**Dialogues with Students: Ka, Kemal and Beatriz**

Over the course of this academic year I have come into regular contact with approximately 25 students at Manitou Lake and 25 students at Sans Arbe. Much of this contact has initially been through dialogue journals. Dialogue journals are valuable tools for literacy development, which grows out of personal knowledge, diverse experiences, and interests, involves interaction with

others, and takes time (Vygotsky, 1978; Freire, 1970; Peyton & Staton, 1993). Moreover, I was interested in dialogue journals as a source of information about students' cultures, activities and needs, as a private channel for honest communication, and as a means for resolving difficult classroom situations (Reed, 1993). With funds from a small grant some colorful journals with blank pages were purchased and given to interested students. Over the course of the year about ten students at each school have made regular entries in this dialogue journal exchange, which involves myself, a research assistant, and various students from my ESL and bilingual education courses at the university.

To represent the diversity, as well as some of the commonality, of their experiences, I have chosen three students to profile below: Ka, a Hmong girl of 17 who immigrated to Sans Arbe seven years ago from a refugee camp in Thailand; Kemal, 16, who came to Sans Arbe last year with his immediate family as refugees from Kosovo; and Beatriz, 15, whose family came north from Mexico last Fall to join her father, who was already working in Manitou Lake. Each profile also represents an important aspect of this research on critical pedagogy: In the case of Ka, it is the documentation of the *mind trap* that is school for so many bilingual youth; in the case of Kemal, it is the challenge of teaching critical history to those who know, first hand, about oppression; and, in the case of Beatriz, it is an example of the potential of dialogue to reach across the dividing lines of language and culture to a new sense of understanding.

**Ka and the Mind Trap**

Ka is a tall, strong, friendly girl with black hair and eyes. When we initiated the dialogue journal project, she was one of the students who responded most enthusiastically, and who has corresponded most regularly. Below is her first entry:

> October 2, 1999
>
> Hello.
>
> Well...how is your day? My not so good...I have alot homework to do.

I'm Ka...I'm junior this year. I'm 17 years old, and right now I don't really a goal...yet I don't really what I'm gonna do after finishing high school. I want to continue going to school but I don't think I'm that smart. I'm afraid I might not make it, but sometime I told myself that if I don't try I'll never know.

Right now school is very hard for me. Sometime I just want to take off and run away or just not coming to school. My grade are going down, it just keep dropping and dropping down.

I also have alot of stress and right now I'm just trying my best to do what I could.

Well--I got go now, so...Hopefully I'll heard or see you soon. Bye,

Ka

I was immediately drawn to Ka, for when she spoke about school, her grades ("dropping and dropping down") and her levels of stress, she seemed to embody the challenges facing secondary bilingual students. In the months since then I have learned that Ka and her older brother both work full-time jobs while in high school; that, as the eldest daughter in a family of nine, she has primary responsibility for cooking, cleaning, and helping the younger children. This responsibility is made more stressful since her father and mother are away at work for much of the day. When I made a brief visit to the family's duplex recently, I was struck by how tired her mother looked. Most days she works a job from 7:00 am until 3:00 pm, and then another job from 3:30 pm until midnight. To help support large families living close to the poverty line, it is not surprising that for many bilingual students, finding work often takes precedence over getting an education.

I was also interested in Ka's name: I had just finished reading Roberto Calasso's (1998) Ka, an extraordinary narrating of the mental and spiritual terrain of India from the earliest Vedic

scripts until the time of Buddha. Here is my response to her first journal entry, and her response to my query about her name:

> October 5, 1999
>
> Hi! Nyob zoo. This is a brief note from Dr. Don. I am really curious about your name, "Ka." Do you know, I read a book called Ka this summer? "Ka" in India in the old days was the first question, the first "being," it meant "who..."
>
> What does "Ka" signify for you?
>
> I'll write more next time, I promise.....Dr. Don

> October 10, 1999
>
> Nyob zoo,
>
> ...And you were asking what my name "Ka" meant in our language it meant bug or insect or a line. it's kind of a strange name, So the book that you been read in this summer name "Ka" could you please tell me more about it? or where you found that book cause I'm going check it out and read about it. I've never know that my name meant something else in other culture...
>
> Sib ntsib dua (ncaim lawm).....Ka

On November 9, I shadowed Ka from 7:30 until 3 pm at high school. During five of the hours I shadowed Ka, she quietly filled in worksheets or quizzes. During one hour (U.S. history) she watched part of "Little Big Man," a movie starring Dustin Hoffman. In her final hour, a business teacher attempted to engage students in active learning. While he worked out the kinks of the scenario up front, the majority of the class talked freely with each other, the first time this had occurred in Ka's classes all day. Of course, their topics of conversation had nothing to do with the class, and more to do with being a teenager. Here is an excerpt from my field notes:

...This is the third hour since Ka has started school. Thus far she has worked steadily on, first, an accounting assignment, and now, a test on literature. No group work, no engagement of teachers/students in dialogue. ITS MORE OF A JOB THAN AN ADVENTURE. Metaphor: School as Unpaid Job...(3rd period)

...Most students do what they are asked to do--some might grumble, but they acquiesce. Very few openly challenge the system, and, of course, the students become the problem, not the school, not the mind-numbing instruction, not the depersonalized curriculum.

There is a postcard on the wall which says,

MINDTRAP

Perhaps a movie ad. All I can think is that this school, and high schools across the country, are mindtraps for our youth, and soultraps as well. Is this why students pursue "individualism" of a tatoo? A clothing style? Because school life is killing their creative selves?

Ka continues to work until the bell...(5th period)

The day I was shadowing her, Ka wrote this in her journal:

November 9, 1999

Hello Dr.

Well I hope you felt better now cause we been sitting in class for pretty much the whole time. And thank you for coming I know it's not fun but thanks anyway.

Well today is kind of a headache day for me cause you know I don't really know what to do cause my first hour teacher wasn't here and

the sub didn't really explain well enough so I could do the homework at home...

Well I hope you enjoy the tour with me today and I'm sorry if thing doesn't go the way you planned. Sib ntsib dua os.

Bye,

Ka

Indeed, it was "kind of a headache day." It was the kind of lower track, meaningless educational experience which has been all too common in U.S. schools (Oakes, 1995; Kozol, 1991; Goodlad, 1984). Much of the current discourse about the education of bilingual students at the secondary level is driven by the need to, at best, help such students succeed academically as they adapt to the mainstream. Yet, at what point do educators begin to question the dominant ideology which drives mainstream education as well as other social and political processes? For Paulo Freire, the neo-liberal, capitalist ideology so powerful at present in most of the world limits the ways in which students can learn and teachers can teach:

> From the standpoint of (neoliberal) ideology, only one road is open as far as educative practice is concerned: Adapt the student to what is inevitable, to what cannot be changed. In this view, what is essential is technical training, so that the student can adapt and, therefore, survive (Freire, 1998:27).

Rather, Freire urges the teaching of content in ways that bring forth the adventure of learning for teachers and students alike:

> "The teaching of contents, undertaken critically, involves a teacher's total commitment to the legitimate attempt by the student to take in hand the responsibility of being a knowing subject...a teacher committed to the adventure of bringing to birth in the student a person at ease who can articulate in his or her subjectivity" (Freire, 1998:112).

person at ease who can articulate in his or her subjectivity" (Freire, 1998:112).

Recently we tried to bring about half a dozen high school students to a writing conference to talk about their dialogue journals, their lives, school, and their advice for teachers. Unfortunately, the session was cancelled at the last minute, due to lack of interest. In order not to disappoint the students, Katie, the research assistant, and I invited them to help make a video on the day the conference was to be held. Ka and her friend Mai Lee were able to come, but Mai Lee kept asking questions: Just what kind of a video were we making? Shouldn't we make a plan first? Shouldn't we meet with the other students and talk over what the video will be about? Her sense of professionalism and ownership of this project was impressive. In fact, we didn't make the video that day, but Ka and Mai Lee began to brainstorm some possibilities. They imagined scenes from traditional Hmong villages in the mountains of Laos; life in the refugee camps of Thailand; their journeys to the United States, and their lives in Sans Arbe. Two of my students at the university have mentioned an interest in facilitating this video project, this next adventure in learning.

**The Arkan of the Washita**

Kemal sits beside me in the high school cafeteria during his second period study hall. He is about six feet tall, slim, short, trim hair and brown serious eyes. He wearing a dark blue sweatshirt with "American Yachting" and the sketch of a yacht in white, tan corduroy pants, and black and white all-purpose tennis shoes. When we begin to chat about his upcoming test in American History, the study hall monitor comes over and asks us to move to the periphery of the room; we are breaking the silence imposed on the other 60-70 students gathered there that morning.

His test is about "the Old West." Kemal shows me the study sheets where the names of 10 important figures of that era are graphically organized, along with spaces to fill in their dates of birth, death, nicknames, and importance. Who are these ten figures? Somehow I am not surprised to find the usual suspects: Buffalo Bill Ćody, Wyatt Earp, Billy the Kid, Calamity Jane, George



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Armstrong Custer... They are all white, and, save for the gunslinging Calamity Jane, all male. In the small rectangular space corresponding to Custer's "importance," Kemal has written, "Good at surrounding Indian villages."

I shared with Kemal that I had been to the site of one of the villages which Custer had surrounded: Black Kettle's camp on the Washita in Western Oklahoma. On Memorial Day, 1999, we met Sam and his family when we stopped at the "Battle of the Washita" historical marker. Sam is descended from the few Southern Cheyennes who survived Custer's predawn raid. The camp was home mostly to women, children and elders. Black Kettle, a peace chief, kept an American flag and a white flag flying before the entrance to his tipi, but these protected neither him nor his defenseless people that morning. Custer's troopers surrounded the village and then rode-in to attack, burning lodges and shooting at anyone who tried to escape through the snow-covered landscape. Brown (1970) describes how Custer followed his orders to "kill or hang all warriors":

> In a matter of minutes Custer's troopers destroyed Black Kettle's village...To kill or hang all the warriors meant separating them from old men, women and children. This work was too slow and dangerous for the cavalrymen; they found it much more efficient and safe to kill indiscriminately. They killed 103 Cheyennes, but only 11 were warriors. They captured 53 women and children (164).

When the news of this "victory" reached the East, Custer was known as the "Hero of the Washita." "Custer," I suggested to Kemal, "was the Arkan of the Old West."

Kemal's eyes harden in recognition of the name of one of the most wanted Serbian war criminals. "You know," he said, "We believe that Arkan is not dead." He said that many Kosovar refugees feel that Arkan's so-called assassination was faked to allow him to avoid prosecution for crimes against humanity. Rogel (1998) has described Arkan in this way:

> The war in Yugoslavia was made to order for those like Arkan. Thugs, criminals and those used to operating lawlessly thrived in the chaotic environment...If Arkan was not the initiator of the war's



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> ethnic cleansing policies, as some claim, he and the Tigers were responsible for some of its most bloody atrocities (107).

Kemal tells me, "Arkan was responsible for the deaths of 300,000 people. Do you know, when Arkan's soldiers stopped me and my dad and held us for questioning, they did drugs right in front of us?"

"They say that many of Custer's soldiers were drunk on whiskey that morning on the Washita," I respond. "Maybe, to do the things they are being asked to do against defenseless people, some soldiers have to be drunk or on drugs."

Dialogues which reconsider our histories and our present from multiple perspectives are fundamental to what Paulo Freire calls a universal human ethic in teaching, an ethic not afraid

> to condemn the exploitation of labor and the manipulation that makes a rumor into truth and truth into a mere rumor. To condemn the fabrication of illusions, in which the unprepared become hopelessly trapped and the weak and defenseless are destroyed...an ethic affronted by racial, sexual, and class discrimination. For the sake of this ethic, which is inseparable from educative practice, we should struggle, whether our work is with children, youth or adults (Freire, 1998:23-24).

I shared with Kemal that my 5 year-old son liked to play another story from the "Old West" with his action figures. Many days when I returned from work he would ask, "Dad, can you play 'The Day Custer Died' (the Battle of the Little Big Horn) with me? You be Custer and I'll be Crazy Horse." Inspired, I borrow his action figures and have my preservice bilingual teachers play "La Matanza de Washita" and other scenes from history, and together we brainstorm how to use play, and role play, to critically address history with bilingual students of all ages. When next I see Kemal at his aunt's restaurant, he smiles, looks at my family and asks, "Which is the son who likes to play history?"

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**Beatriz y John: A Bilingual Dialogue Journal**

Mexican students are clear about what brings their families to Manitou Lake: It is the opportunity to work in the meat packing industry, an industry whose accompanying stench, unsanitary conditions and abuse of immigrant workers has perhaps changed little since Upton Sinclair first chronicled these details in The Jungle (1906). One of the high school bilingual teachers at Manitou Lake tells me that the packing companies knowingly entice undocumented workers to town, and when they have put in enough time to qualify for benefits, they are fired. If workers want, they can "start over." If they protest, their names can be given to the INS. Teresa, who has lived in Manitou Lake for one month, speaks of how this work affects her mother:

> Mi mama trabaja en el empacador. Es duro el trabajo. Llega muy cansada, y a veces llega con ampollas en las manos porque dice que es muy dificil, tiene que ser muy rapido. A una persona tener tanta rapidez y toda deberia pagarle mas porque sufre mas. Es un trabajo muy cansado.

I have followed the beginning (English) level bilingual students to their classes during the course of the school day in Manitou Lake. I have seen them helping each other in Economics class, while the teacher tells them to do their own work. I have seen them playing badminton in gym class, one of the few places where they are paired by their teacher with an English-speaking partner. I have seen them struggling with science exams about atomic structure, while their teacher, an experienced bilingual professional, appears frustrated with their low literacy, lack of knowledge of the concepts of science, and general unfamiliarity with the "rules" of U.S. school behavior. I have seen them previously with a bilingual language arts teacher who had first hand experience with the lack of educational infrastructure in rural Mexico, and who created spaces for them to critically address their new lives in the United States; I see them now with his replacement, a well-meaning South American who has no teaching credentials, as she struggles with their growing complacency and resignation.



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Yet, among those students who have not given up is Beatriz. Since she arrived last Fall she has embarked on a beautifully written dialogue journal with John, a poet, and student of TESOL at our university. Neither is literate in the language of the other. Nevertheless, with interpretation on both sides, they have found a way to understand each other. Below follow excerpts from their journal entries:

> Hello John,
>
> Tratare de escribirle en Ingles para contar le un poco de mi pueblo.
> My town is small. it is surrounded by mountain and between they
> pool of water.
> perdone que lla no le siga contestando en ingles pero es que se me
> hace muy dificil y ademas tardaria mucho y el tiempo se esta
> acavando.
> En mi pueblo la mayoria son catolicos y es por eso que creen en las
> imagenes mi pueblo le dieron el nombre de S.S. Nicanandita por
> que ellos ablan una lengua indigena llamado mixteco y Nicanandita
> en misteco es el lugar que nace y frota el agua.
> pala otra le seguire contando mas. Hasta luego.....Beatriz

> Beatriz: I was very happy to read your letter. I liked the part where
> you describe your home town. It sounds like paradise to me.
> I can't remember if I told you where I was raised. I lived on the
> plains or llano in Norte Dakota. It was flat and in some places you
> could see for 30 miles in all directions. Sometimes, I miss that. I
> do like Wisconsin, too, but you can't see very far here. I remember
> when I was on submarines--they go underwater--in the navy, people
> would ask me about North Dakota. They wondered how I could
> live on the ship when I came from such a place.



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I don't know if I will be able to write to you anymore because soon school will end for me. But, I want to tell you how much I enjoyed writing to you...Muchas gracias para escribir de me! Hasta luego o Buena suerte, John

John was trying to say goodbye, as he would be starting his clinical assignment in the Spring and would no longer be in regular contact with me and the journals. Beatriz, however, does not sense an ending to this correspondence, and she replies the following:

John: Yo estoy muy contenta por que usted me sige contestando y ademas tambien estoy emocionada por que llega la navidad sabe esta navidad vaser la primera vez que la voy a pasar junto con mi papa por que las otra navidad mi papa a estado ausente del pueblo y es por eso que no estabamos juntos. yo espero que usted pase una feliz Navidad con su familia porque la navidad es muy bonito. Es un dia lleno de amor, de alegria y sobre todo cuando esta toda la familia reunida, juntos con los amigos, ermanos. felicitandoce unos a otros.

Pero le confieso que auque estoy muy feliz por esta navidad tambien me ciento triste porque yo extraño a mis amigas. y es que nosotros cada año organisabamos una fiesta de jovenes haciendo piñatas, intercambiamos regalos, juntas preparabamos todos para una fiesta y la pasabamos muy bien es por esa que yo las extraño.

Time passes before I encounter John again, and Beatriz writes the following:

John: yo estoy contenta por que yo ya podre escribirle denuevo yo estoy emocionada por que ya se acerca el verano para poder saler a pasear, ir a caminar. yo me diberti con la nieve por que ya esta primera vez que yo conoci la nieve. yo con mis hermanos fuimos a pasear cuando estaba nevando y nos dibertimos mucho jugando la

nieve. yo quisiera saber como paso usted sus vacaciones, adonde fue, como paso la navidad.

Toda mi familia estuvimos reunidos en mi casa e organizamos una comida tradicional del pueblo en de donde nosotros fuimos y todos la pasamos muy bonito yo espero que usted me conteste y me cuente de como paso la navida, es perare su contestacion hasta luego

John.....Beatriz

When I meet John again and share these latest entries from Beatriz, he is very moved. He sits down in the lobby of our office and writes this response:

(Beatriz), It was so good to hear from you again! I know how you feel about friends that you miss. Many times I think about friends I have left behind and I am sad. I try to think about the fun we shared and this helps me to deal with my sadness. I sometimes imagine what they might be doing when I think of them, too.

All of your pleasant thoughts and wishes must have rubbed off on me over Christmas because I had a wonderful time with my family in Arizona. We had so many people that we had to stay in two different houses. Everyone took turns cooking and cleaning so that my Mom didn't have to do all of the work. On Christmas day, we exchanged some small presents and went to Mass. Father Alberto is the priest and he knows Spanish very well.

I am almost done with formal schooling. Soon, I will be a teacher. Even though I will be a teacher I will still be learning though. Education is very important throughout a person's life. I hope you continue to go to school for a long time because you are very smart! Don told me that you know 3 languages. It takes a lot of intelligence



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to do that. So, don't let anyone ever tell you that you are not smart...

I hope everything is going well for you, Beatriz. Soon, it will be Spring and we will be able to see the trees and bushes budding. I am excited because then I can cook outside. Take care, Beatriz!

Peace, John

This bilingual dialogue between Beatriz and John embodies what Paulo Freire called the ethics of universal aspiration, ethics needed by all who would be teachers:

> The place upon which a new rebellion should be built is not the ethics of the marketplace with its crass insensitivities to the voice of genuine humanity but the ethics of universal aspiration. The ethics of human solidarity (Freire, 1998:116).

Nevertheless, it is clear that Beatriz and other Mexican immigrant students are involved in a transitional educational program which may only prepare them to fill menial positions in the economic hierarchy (Spener, 1988). One of the best teachers in the program has acknowledged privately that many of the boys are just waiting to turn sixteen so they can drop out and begin working full-time in the packing industry. Even those, such as Beatriz, who are getting good grades and who have aspirations for college must face the grim realities which workers worldwide face in these days of international capital. Chomsky (1994) writes:

> (The) internationalization of production provides multinational corporations with new weapons to undermine working people in the West. Workers must now accept an end to their "luxurious" lifestyles and agree to "flexibility of labor markets" (i.e., not knowing whether you have a job tomorrow)...The attack on worker rights, social standards, and functioning democracy throughout the world reflects this new economic order (175-176).

It was not coincidence that the passage of the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in Mexico and the United States was accompanied by the beginning of the Zapatista Rebellion in Southeast Mexico. Serving as a forum for democratic expression, the Zapatistas brought to the world's attention the human dimension of transnational capitalism. Ancestral lands held by indigenous people could be bought up by international developers; millions of Mexicans were expected to lose their jobs in the first five years of the accord. A short time after the NAFTA vote in U.S. Congress, "wokers were fired from Mexican Honeywell and GE plants for attempting to organize independent unions" (Chomsky, 1994:179). Clearly, the large-scale immigration of Mexicans to Manitou Lake and elsewhere in the United States is fueled by the ransacking of their native land by forces of transnational capital. At the same time, these newly arrived workers encounter the distrust and open animosity of U.S. workers who have seen their jobs and factories "go South," all in the name of "flexibility of labor markets."

In conjunction with the bilingual Economics teacher at Manitou Lake, my students at the university are creating a unit focused on the human dimension of NAFTA. Through a series of role plays taking place on both sides of the border, and guided dialogues with students, we hope to connect Mexican bilingual students' lives and their families' occupations to a critical discussion of the new global economy.

**Extending the Dialogue**

This study suggests that a dialogic pedagogy, where students' linguistic and cultural understandings are sources of knowledge creation and bridges to the curriculum, will benefit bilingual students academically and socially. Preliminary findings of this research suggests that dialogic pedagogy has the potential to transform the lives of bilingual secondary students and those who work with them. When engaged in dialogues with classmates and teachers about critical perspectives on language, culture, history, and other subjects, bilingual secondary students become more interested in the academic content of school, and more motivated to master the linguistic tools which will allow them a full access to economic, social, cultural and political participation in society. All students engaged in the dialogue journal project eagerly await



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responses, and classroom visits, from their writing partners. The dialogue journals have also changed the way in which journal partners at the university view the issues related to educating bilingual secondary students. With the permission of the high school students, I have shared excerpts from their journals with my classes at the university, and, in early May, several students from Sans Arbe will come to address one of my evening classes directly about their experiences in and out of school. The university is also sponsoring a day on campus for all interested bilingual students at Manitou Lake West and Sans Arbe South, where students can get a glimpse of the daily life of college students, and keep alive their aspirations for higher education.

Moreover, teachers and counselors from Sans Arbe South, together with students, professors and the dean of the education at the university, have been engaged in a reading seminar focused on Faltis and Wolfe (1999) and Freire (1998). Through dialogue together we have initiated plans for after-school and summer academic programs (for university and high school credit) to be offered to interested bilingual students in the region. Finally, recognizing that change must be school-wide in nature, we have made plans to initiate coursework for all pre-service and in-service teachers about how to work effectively, and critically, with bilingual students in the regular classroom.

Flecha (1999) argues that "educational and social failure (of marginalized youth) is the failure of an educational system and a society that can neither recognize nor make use of the cultural richness of different groups and individuals" (78). Rather, schools can be "public spheres, actively engaged in producing new forms of democratic community organized as sites of translation, negotiation, and resistance" (111). From school textbooks to Hollywood movies, most students continue to come across a version of America where White, Anglo-American values and heroes comprise the dominant worldviews of our times. When educators challenge this dominant perspective and encourage the development of students' own stories and perspectives of the world, they take on the role of border crossers (Giroux, 1997). The border crosser commits herself to remembering and to helping students to remember their own histories of struggle; she values diverse cultural and linguistic understandings of the world; and she prepares students with

the critical tools to address the unequal distribution of power in society. Strategically placed between the home, the school, and society, educators have sometimes exacerbated cultural conflicts in students' lives, yet they are also in a position to do the work of cultural healing that is necessary in our often wounded society. Through the use of dialogic pedagogy and as producers of culture, educators can encourage students to create knowledge, and to critically address unequal power constructions in their lives.

This is the particular challenge facing educators of bilingual youth: to help develop the academic, cultural and social skills students will need, not to assimilate to a dominant American culture in crisis, but to effectively struggle for, and bring into being, a new democratic culture. Such a culture will value people, and their diverse ideas and contributions, rather than profits; such a culture will give credence to hopes and dreams of freedom, equality and brotherhood.

Appendix A

**Bilingual Youth in U.S. Secondary Schools (from 1990 census data):**

- One in six youths ages 14-17, or 3.4 million in total, spoke a language other than English in the home, was born in a foreign country, or both.
- Of these, 1.7 million, about half, were Hispanic, representing a variety of Latin American countries of origin.
- Moreover, there was a tremendous variety of Asian languages and countries of origin represented among these youth.
- California alone accounts for 40% of bilingual youth (approximately 40% of school age population).
- Among the various immigrant groups poverty is a serious challenge, especially for Hmong, Mon-Khmer and Cambodians, who have the highest poverty rates of any single groups.
- Drop out rates for foreign-born, non-English speakers were 1 in 5, as compared to 1 in 12 for native-born, English speaking youth.
- Furthermore, there are low enrollment rates in high school for Mexican-born youth, as well as for some Southeast Asian groups such as the Hmong.

from Waggoner, D. (1999). Who Are Secondary Newcomer and Linguistically Different Youth? In Faltis, C. and Wolfe, P. (Eds.) So Much to Say: Adolescents, Bilingualism, & ESL in the Secondary School, 13-41. New York: Teachers College Press.



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**Appendix B**

## Towards Quality Educational Opportunity for Bilingual Youth

- a flexible yet rigorous program emphasizing academic content and social knowledge. This would be a cornerstone to both the Sheltered English approach as well as a dual literacy program
- interdisciplinary, small groups led by a single teacher
- early access to mainstream academic courses such as the regular English class and other transitions to higher education
- extension of instructional time, both during the day and beyond the typical 4-year high school career
- systematic, ongoing assessment of students through a variety of means
- creation of challenging, for-credit courses for minority language students
- teacher planning and implemention teams
- strengthening of partnerships with parents and institutions

from Faltis, C. and Wolfe, P. (Eds.) (1999). So Much to Say: Adolescents, Bilingualism, & ESL in the Secondary School. New York: Teachers College Press.

## Appendix C

**Education for What? Excerpts from Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of Freedom (1998)**

- Education Means Moving Beyond Technical Training:

> From the standpoint of (neoliberal) ideology, only one road is open as far as educative practice is concerned: Adapt the student to what is inevitable, to what cannot be changed. In this view, what is essential is technical training, so that the student can adapt and, therefore, survive (27).

> The teaching of contents, undertaken critically, involves a teacher's total commitment to the legitimate attempt by the student to take in hand the responsibility of being a knowing subject...a teacher committed to the adventure of bringing to birth in the student a person at ease who can articulate in his or her subjectivity (112).

- Education Means Dialogue

> If I am prejudiced against a child who is poor, or black or Indian, or rich or against a woman who is a peasant or from the working class, it is obvious that I cannot listen to them and I cannot speak *with* them, only *to* or *at* them, from the top down. Even more than that, I forbid myself from understanding them (108).

> The more I give myself to the experience of living with what is different without fear and without prejudice, the more I come to know the self I am shaping and that is being shaped as I travel the road of life (120).



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Appendix D

# Dialogue Journals with Bilingual Youth

## Literacy development

- grows out of personal knowledge and interests
- involves interaction with others (Vygotsky, 1978; Freire, 1970, 1998)
- grows out of diverse experiences and takes diverse forms
- takes time

adapted from Peyton, J.K. and Staton, J. (editors) (1993). Dialogue Journals in the Multilingual Classroom: Building Language Fluency and Writing Skills Through Written Interaction. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

## Some benefits of dialogue journaling with multilingual students:

- an aid to lesson planning
- a way to individualize instruction
- a source of information about students' cultures, activities and needs
- a private channel for honest communication
- a means for resolving difficult classroom situations

from Reed, L. (1993). Opening the Door to Communication in the Multilingual/Multicultural Classroom. In Peyton, J.K. and Staton, J. (editors), Dialogue Journals in the Multilingual Classroom: Building Language Fluency and Writing Skills Through Written Interaction. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

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